

## ELDER HYRUM G. SMITH

*(Presiding Patriarch of the Church)*

It is a very inspiring sight, indeed, to behold the multitude gathered here in the tabernacle, and then to see the gathering on the outside where they are listening to the voices of the speakers, through a little device which the Lord has inspired in the minds of men to teach a very simple truth; and I desire to bear testimony to that truth, and am grateful for the privilege of doing so.

Ever since our early infancy, as members of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, we have been taught to pray to our heavenly Father, knowing and feeling and believing that our prayers would be heard and answered. Hundreds and hundreds of our members bear testimony that the Lord has heard and answered their prayers. I, too, know that the Lord lives and that he does hear and answer our prayers. And now, through a simple little device which the Lord has inspired in the hearts of men, it is my faith and my testimony that the Lord is going to teach the world that he actually can and does hear our prayers, and hears the prayers of those who seek him in faith, for faith is a wonderful power in the world. When we are in tune with our Creator, with our Redeemer, and seek him in faith, we are wonderfully blessed, and our prayers are heard and answered; and this simple truth is going to be made so plain and so positive that no one will be left in doubt.

I am grateful, too, that we are given our agency—another wonderful but simple truth which the Lord has made plain to us. In the lines of poetry written in our hymn book, two verses read as follows:

“Know this, that every soul is free  
To choose his life and what he'll be;  
For this eternal truth is given,  
That God will force no man to heaven.

“He'll call, persuade, direct aright,  
Bless him with wisdom, love and light;  
In nameless ways be good and kind,  
But never force the human mind.”

I was attending a quarterly conference of one of the stakes of Zion a few years ago, when the entire conference was characterized by testimony bearing. Both men and women, holding different stations in the stake, were called upon to bear their testimonies. At the close of the conference a good brother who had been out of the Church for over thirty years, came to the president of the stake, with tears in his eyes, and said: “President, I have stood it just as long as I can and I can stand it no longer. At your first opportunity I want to be baptized again. I have been out of this Church for thirty years. My children have grown up around me, many of them following my teachings and my example, under the influence of the spirit of apostasy. My grandchildren are being taught the principles of the gospel, and I rejoice in the fact that they, as well as some of my children, are coming back into

the Church and receiving its blessings. I regret that I have been out of the Church so much of my life; and while I have nourished a grudge and hard feelings, yet I have known in my heart that this is the Church of God. Now I regret those actions. I regret the lives of my children, that they have been nourished largely in the spirit of apostasy; now, for the remaining years of my life, I want to live in the Church and change my life that it may conform to the teachings of Christ, that I, too, with this multitude who have borne their testimonies, may enjoy the Spirit of the Lord and receive forgiveness." He was afterwards baptized. His children also, many of them, turned from their ways of apostasy and came into the Church. A glorious privilege, a blessing coming again to that household.

I rejoice in the blessing of our agency that when we are moved by the spirit of truth, and our testimonies are so enlarged within us that we are directed along the lines of conduct and action which bring us in keeping and in touch with many glorious privileges and blessings.

I rejoice in my membership and association with this multitude of men bearing the holy Priesthood. No place else in all the world can you go and see a sight such as I behold this moment—the faces of men bearing the holy Priesthood gathered together in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ, all with an undoubting testimony that the Lord lives and that this is his work.

I rejoice in this wonderful privilege and being numbered with you in this glorious work. I would to God that all could understand the simple truths that we secure through the testimony of the Spirit, for it burns within our hearts, and makes known to us the truth. Let me admonish you, my brethren and sisters, to cherish that little monitor that is within you, for it will guide and direct you in the ways of truth and of correct and right living.

I regret that there are many among us who are not as loyal as we should like to have them. It grieves me and it grieves my co-laborers, and I am sure it grieves the Lord, when word comes that our fellows have been untrue to trusts imposed upon them or in them; and we, every one of us, know that it is wrong when we are untrue to a trust, or break a sacred confidence. I pray that God will continue to be mindful of us as his children, that we may hearken unto those still small whisperings that they may guide us always in the paths of virtue and right and loyalty to trust; that we may be fit instruments in the hands of God to fulfil his purposes in the earth; and do it without embarrassment to him or to his work. When any of us are caught in the snares of temptation and fall by the wayside, it not only hurts us individually but it hurts all of us. I pray that the Lord will continue to be mindful of us that we may be more loyal in the future than we have been in the past, loyal to our callings and to our responsibilities; although we are growing in number, and today we seem to be present in goodly number, yet we are a handful, as it were, in the eyes of the world. We are only a few in number compared to the great host in the

world, and we must remember and know that where the Lord requires responsibility, he expects us to be loyal and true to it. Therefore the responsibility is upon our shoulders as gathered Ephraim, living here in the land of Ephraim, in the tops of the mountains, in the midst of the everlasting hills, where the Lord has selected a gathering place and named it through the mouths of his holy prophets, both ancient and modern. "This is the place," and here it will be required at our hands, not only by our words but by our every day conduct. When we fall by the wayside the world sees us because their eyes are open upon us, and they are watching the actions and the words and conduct of the little handful of people that God has gathered into the mountain tops in these the last days.

I pray that the Lord will continue to be watchful and mindful of this people, that we may be loyal and true and faithful and earnest, seeking day by day and laboring day by day to fulfil God's purposes, for where much is given much is required; and with that love of the truth, with that testimony which has been in my heart ever since a youth, I pray that God will be mindful of us and that he will continue to inspire, bless, sustain and honor those who are called to take the lead and to direct: that God's work may continue to grow, and that those to whom responsibility is given, in whom trust is imposed, may be loyal and true, and equal to the responsibility, and receive the blessings that the Lord has prepared for the faithful in the House of Israel in these the last days.

May the Lord bless you, my brethren and sisters, in your homes, in your labors, in all your righteous undertakings, inspire you and give you faith, devotion, humility and power to know and do the will of God; and by following the promptings of that "little Monitor" within you, it is your right to know. And if you will listen and hearken unto its promptings, I promise you that you shall know, and shall have courage and faith to do the right and hold steadfast and true to the faith, that it shall not be necessary to go back and count your steps in regret; but rejoice in the blessings that have been promised to you as descendants of Father Abraham and especially the chosen of the Lord, being, most of us, of the house of Joseph or of the lineage of Ephraim who was especially chosen and especially blessed. May God help us to appreciate and live worthy of these blessings as they are being made plain to us every day of our lives. May the peace of the Lord be with us and be with his people wherever they are, whether gathered or scattered. I pray for these blessings; and in the name of the Lord bless this great conference,—those who preside and those who hearken and listen, as members or as officers. May God bless you all according to your righteous needs, both temporally and spiritually, I pray in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.