

ELDER MELVIN J. BALLARD

I desire very much to say a few words upon this important occasion about the great responsibilities which rest upon the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints. There is no more important responsibility than that to which the President of the Church has referred, in issuing the call during this conference for men who have already rendered missionary service, who are at present qualified to preach the gospel, to re-enter that field and assist the youth of Israel who are at present laboring as missionaries of the Church, particularly in the United States missions, to discharge this great responsibility which is resting upon the Church.

MISSIONARY WORK A FIRST GREAT RESPONSIBILITY OF THE CHURCH

I rejoice in my heart that this call has come, for it has been a dream of mine about which I have talked a good many times. Only six months ago I recall it was the theme of some remarks which I made in the conference. I do hope that the call shall be answered by the able men of Israel, that we shall recognize that God has placed the responsibility upon this Church to give to all flesh the news that he has spoken. I hope that this responsibility will be accepted by all classes. I have said, upon this point, that I believe the doctors and the lawyers might do well to consider responding to such an invitation, and that they owe something to the men of their own profession whom they can reach better than any one else, to carry the message of the gospel to them. Likewise men in the business professions whom we have excused from long-term missions, they may, with profit to themselves and without injury to their business, accept of this invitation to render service for a shorter period of time.

ADVANTAGES IN MISSIONARY WORK

I believe that every man who responds to this call will prolong his life. There is nothing so invigorating to the health, so uplifting to the spirits of men, as to preach the gospel. I believe that the money spent will be well invested in the good health that shall come, in the prolongation of life.

While it has been a tremendous sacrifice on the part of parents particularly to send their sons and daughters into the missionary field, a constant and continual drain upon their resources, a drain that probably no other community on earth could stand, and we could not stand it were it not for the blessings of God; nevertheless, I have never met in my associations, with hundreds of parents of missionaries, a single one who has ever regretted the money he spent in sending missionaries into the field to declare the gospel message. So far as the personal advantages to the missionary are concerned, I am sure that the money never could have been spent to equal advantage. If a young man had been sent to a college, or given a training in any other field, it would not have brought him

so large personal advantage as his missionary experience. It has developed those finer qualities of the mind, faith, confidence in one's self, as well as confidence in God, and has given him the opportunity to study human nature and to be able to succeed in winning those who are opposed to his views, and that in itself is a valuable asset to any man, when his missionary experience is concluded, I care not what his business may be.

In addition to that, the valuable testimony, about which we have heard, can be obtained in the missionary field as nowhere else. It is worth more to any young man in Israel to have in his very heart and soul a burning conviction, a knowledge that God lives, and that Jesus is the Christ, than to be possessed of much wealth and to be devoid of this blessing. There are few, indeed I know of none, who have gone into the missionary field to discharge this obligation and have done their duty who have not been endowed with an abiding testimony that God does live, and that Jesus Christ is his Son. This in itself is worth everything. Indeed we have proved, in our missionary experiences in this Church, that it is more blessed to give than to receive; for if we have given to the world—our time and service—that has been a blessing to mankind, and it has returned with added blessings upon our heads. We have been enriched as communities by the breadth and depth of understanding, and have become cosmopolitan in our conception of things because of the varied experiences that these returning missionaries bring from all lands; for, the best of all lands is brought back to us. In addition to that, we are discharging the great obligation that God has placed upon us, to bring to his sons and daughters the light and the knowledge of the eternal truth, preparing them to come back into his presence and to rejoice in the restoration of the everlasting gospel.

NONE WHO ARE PREPARED TO GO ARE EXEMPT

In responding to this call, I trust that bishops of wards will not excuse themselves. Perchance, one may go. Perchance, it may be possible that one of the stake presidency may respond, and indeed no one should feel himself exempt. It will be profitable to respond, to any who shall accept of this invitation. We need you, we need your strength in this cause. In addition to that, let those who are in need of assistance be helped if necessary by the cooperation of their brethren, because the responsibility is upon each ward to furnish at least one of these brethren, the kind the President has been calling for, and by a cooperative effort on the part of every one in the ward it may be easily possible to help one who could not go without assistance from his associates. I want to invite you also, my brethren and sisters, to prepare yourselves for a continuation of this work, for while the call now is but for a short period, in the ensuing year, I hope and I trust, that the number we are asking for shall continue to go into the missionary field. Men of the class

we are asking for are the kind of men we need to strengthen young and inexperienced men in the mission field, and to carry the gospel to the people whom it is difficult for these young and inexperienced men to reach.

THE RESPONSIBILITY OF CARING FOR OUR MEMBERSHIP

Now the other point, the other responsibility that I have in my own mind, and about which I feel great concern, is the responsibility of taking care of those who come into the Church, all those who are born heirs of the gospel, children of the Latter-day Saints, keeping the flock within the fold, training them, preparing them for the future work which God has for this Church, and to prepare themselves for his coming. I feel great concern that we shall be successful in saving our own. I observe in our own Church records that we have had, so far as births are concerned, nearly four times as many children born to Latter-day Saint parents as all our baptisms number in the world, and that has been true for each of the last several years. While our baptisms in the world have been good—indeed they are a little better each year—we have nothing to complain about, so far as they are concerned, but the future growth and strength of this Church depends upon our ability to save our own. I feel that there is no greater responsibility placed upon us than to feed the sheep and to feed the lambs, and to keep them within the fold.

NEED OF WATCHMEN ON THE TOWERS OF ZION

I would like to say to the presidents of stakes, the bishops of wards and leaders in Zion, that there is need of the watchmen who are upon the towers of Zion, to exercise themselves vigilantly just now, a little more so perhaps than we have found it necessary heretofore. Yet it has always been necessary to be alert and active if we would preserve the flock. But by reason of conditions that obtain in the world, just at this time, I feel that we need to guard our flock against the inroads of the wolves in sheep's clothing. For, so far as the world is concerned, it is very evident to me that we have reached what I call the age of self-indulgence. The experiences through which we are passing reveal the fact that there is a spirit of indulgence in the world that leads men to the violation of the law in order to gratify appetite. The statistics of the United States Government reveals the fact that so far as the consumption of tobacco is concerned it has increased four hundred per cent. in the last ten years. It has doubled in the last two years, and the most sorrowful item they call attention to is the fact that perfumed cigarettes, manufactured to be sold to women, has shown the greatest increase in consumption, and that they cannot be manufactured in quantities sufficient to satisfy the demand. The cost of tobacco alone, in the United States last year, was a little over three billions of dollars. The increase in the consumption of tea

and coffee has also gone forward, to say nothing of the violation of the Eighteenth amendment to the Constitution of the United States, prohibiting the manufacture of and indulgence in alcoholic beverages. Men know that these things are contrary to our physical health, contrary to the peace and the safety of our nation; but the appetite is stronger than the will. Passion and desire rule in many quarters today. Men in positions of trust and confidence, in ever-increasing numbers have shown a lack of fidelity and trustworthiness until surety rates, guaranteeing the honesty and integrity of men in business, have been doubled in the last two years. I could go on calling your attention to these things indicating what I say, that the spirit of the age is the spirit of self-indulgence, and it finds its final expression in self-degradation, in the violation of the law of God, in the committing of sexual sins that are destroying the life of men and women.

LET US KEEP CLEAN AND FREE FROM THE SINS OF THE WORLD

I am not an alarmist, nor do I see anything, particularly just now, that would indicate that there is a serious condition in the Church of Christ, but I see outside the storms that are gathering. I see the influences that are at work. The Lord said that he gathered us into these stakes of Zion to preserve us against the storms when they should break forth without measure upon the inhabitants of the earth. These storms are reaching us. Their influence will come. Individuals will come with their pernicious doctrines that will destroy, if listened to, the faith of the Latter-day Saints. I am anxious, therefore, that the young men and young women of Israel shall keep clean and undefiled from the sins of the world. The greatest evil that is threatening us, yes, and threatening the world, is the evil of immorality. So I am pleading with you that if you want to keep these boys and girls able to receive this witness and testimony of the gospel of Jesus Christ, we must keep them clean, morally clean, and we must adhere to our standards. For we have been taught—I received it from my mother's knee, you have heard it, you men of Israel, from your childhood—that next to the crime of murder itself is the crime of sexual impurity, and that rather than to be found guilty of these things we would better be found dead. Let us therefore adhere to this, our high standard, and we shall survive the storms, no matter how severe they become. We can save ourselves and save these young men and young women of Israel.

PROSPERITY SHOULD RESULT IN SALVATION TO US AND OUR CHILDREN

I rejoice in the bright prospects that are before us, so far as crops are concerned. That is good, that is splendid. It is of importance as a means, however, to a glorious end, and the glorious end is the salvation of ourselves and the salvation of our sons and daughters.

I wish to read a few words on this point from the Lord Jesus Christ, given to the early elders of this Church, and equally applicable to us in this present time. I am reading from the 16th Section of the Book of Doctrine and Covenants, a revelation given to Peter Whitmer, Jr., in the month of June, 1829:

"Hearken, my servant Peter, and listen to the words of Jesus Christ, your Lord and your Redeemer.

"For behold, I speak unto you with sharpness and with power, for mine arm is over all the earth.

"And I will tell you that which no man knoweth save me and thee alone—

"For many times you have desired of me to know that which would be of the most worth unto you.

"Behold, blessed are you for this thing, and for speaking my words which I have given unto you according to my commandments.

"And now, behold, I say unto you, that the thing which will be of the most worth unto you will be to declare repentance unto this people, that you may bring souls unto me, that you may rest with them in the kingdom of my Father."

There is nothing in all this world that can be compared to the value of a human soul, redeemed, sanctified, and made worthy to receive the blessings of God our Father. There is no investment which you men can put your money or your time into that will pay you so well in time or in eternity as to invest in a human soul, whether that shall be in the missionary field or at home, in the care of those precious ones who have come under our supervision. We have already heard scripture in this conference, from the Lord Jesus Christ, wherein he declares that the worth of souls is great in his sight, and if we should labor all our days and as the result of that labor bring, save it be but one of those precious souls, how great will be our joy! I know that I need not convert you to the fact that this is a true doctrine, but we constantly need to be appealed to, to be willing to give ourselves and our means in the accomplishment of this, the greatest work there is in all the world.

CONCERNING GOING ON THE MISSION TO SOUTH AMERICA

My brethren and sisters, I respond to the call that has come from the Presidency of the Church, to leave home and loved ones and my native land, to go with Brother Wells and Brother Pratt into the great South American country. I do not go with any feeling of elation that it is going to be a great pleasure trip; I go in fear and in trembling, trusting in the Lord, knowing that we shall be utterly helpless, save the Lord shall be with us. I have felt in my soul that the time would come—and I thank God that it has come—that that great country may hear the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ. I believe that it, too, is Zion, as the Prophet Joseph Smith has told us. I believe that it is altogether fitting and proper that more than half of the missionaries of the Church should be in the United States missions; for it is unto this land, the land of Zion, that the spirit of gathering has called Israel from all over

the earth. They have been coming here, and here are the majority of our converts. As I recall it, three years ago one million two hundred fifty thousand people were permitted to come into the United States, and the quota was full. Yet, at that time, twenty-five million people applied to come. Since then, however, the government has seen fit to further reduce the privileges of immigration to this country, until today only three per cent. of the foreign population of any nation in this country, in 1900, may now come in, which means that not more than about two hundred thousand can enter this land in any single year from all nations of the earth. Where are they going? According to the evidence that I am gathering since this call came, millions of them are going to South America. I have hoped and prayed that we shall find that there, too, the spirit of gathering has called men and women from all nations of the earth. They are there in large numbers from all nations, and if God is willing to open their hearts and bless us with the ability to reach them and carry the message of the gospel, it is our desire that they who are from the Gentile nations may also, with others, have this privilege of hearing the message of the gospel and come into the fold of Christ. I know not what purpose God may have in their being in that great southland, the other part of Zion. These matters will all unfold in the Lord's own due time. And then it may only be the beginning of that other glorious work that we are anticipating shall come, for the Book of Mormon came to us, not for our sakes, but especially for the sons and daughters of father Lehi, who have dwindled in unbelief. May the day speedily come that this revelation shall also go forth in that land to the millions of sons and daughters who have the blood of father Lehi in their veins, that the day of their redemption may come.

TESTIMONY

May God bless the Saints at home, that they may preserve in the fold safely these precious ones that have been given to us, that they may be ready in preparation for the further extension of the Lord's work, and may his work go forth, that his kingdom may come, that all men may hear and the honest, obedient souls may have a witness and a testimony that he lives. I know with my brethren that God lives, as surely as I know that I live. My testimony is not based upon books. It has come to me by the revelations of the Lord Jesus Christ to my spirit, through the manifestations of the Holy Ghost upon my soul. In the thirteen years I have already spent in the missionary field there have come to me innumerable witnesses and testimonies of the truthfulness of this great work. I know that Christ lives as well as I shall know it when the veil of his tabernacle shall be parted, and he shall be revealed, when I may have the privilege of hearing his voice and looking upon his face, or be invited as he did invite the Nephites to come up and touch him, to see and handle his hands, to feel the prints

of the nails. If that shall some day be my privilege, as I hope it shall, I shall not know any better than I know today; that he lives, that he visited the Prophet Joseph Smith, that he did restore his gospel, and that what the world knows as "Mormonism" is indeed the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Knowing this, there is no sacrifice too great. To leave father, mother, houses and lands, the world and all things for it, is not too big a price to pay for the thing that is the most precious and the most glorious.

THE DESTINY OF ZION CERTAIN

God help us that we shall keep in our hearts, burning sacredly, the desire to fulfil these great obligations that rest upon us, that Zion shall arise and shine, for her destiny is as certain as the rising of the sun. If only we keep the commandments of God, every promise shall be verified, and fulfilled upon our heads. May God help us to do it and speed the day of the redemption of all his sons and daughters, and bring the ungodly and the sinners to repentance; for they shall come to repentance, if not through the preaching of the gospel, through the judgments of Almighty God, for he is speaking, and he shall speak to the nations until they shall hear. God bless you, my brethren and sisters, and his peace be with Zion and all her interests, at home and abroad, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER SYLVESTER Q. CANNON

Presiding-Bishop of the Church

In occupying this important place, my brethren and sisters, I greatly need your faith and sympathy that I may be able to say something that shall be of profit. To that end I desire to enjoy the light of the Holy Ghost.

I would like to read a few words to which President Grant referred in his opening remarks of the conference. The Prophet Micah, in speaking to the people of Israel, and calling their attention to the things which the Lord desired of them, wherein he stated that more than their sacrifices and offerings of rams and oil, the Lord desired their hearts, he made the following statement:

"He hath shewed thee, O man, what is good; and what doth the Lord require of thee, but to do justly, and to love mercy, and to walk humbly with thy God?"

I would like to read also a portion of that which President Grant referred to—that brief but important revelation given to Joseph Smith, the father of the Prophet:

"For behold the field is white already to harvest; and lo, he that thrusteth in his sickle with his might, the same layeth up in store that he perisheth not, but bringeth salvation to his soul;