

sustaining the law. There are some among us, I am sorry to say, who seem to be wavering at the present time with reference to honoring, obeying, and sustaining certain laws. "It is alright," they say, as one of the brethren quoted from President Grant, "to sustain those laws when they do not come in conflict with our business or with our appetites; otherwise they are not good for us!"

I am thankful, I repeat again, for the loyalty of the "Mormon" people in sustaining the prohibition law, and I am sorry that some, apparently, from what they say and from their actions, are wavering. Let us, as a people, be loyal in support of those laws. They are constitutional, have been so declared. And it is the safe course, as far as the people of this Church are concerned, to honor, sustain, and obey those laws, whether we like them or not. And I want to tell you that it is the safe course for this nation to follow. When individuals or a community or a nation select only those laws that suit them, and obey them and break those other laws, they are in a dangerous position. When a constitutional amendment prohibiting slavery was passed, there were those who were not ready to sustain and uphold that amendment, just as there are those now who are not ready and willing to uphold and sustain the Constitution of the United States. The Volstead act is a part now of the Constitution of this nation, and is so declared by a large majority of the people of this great nation, and it is the duty of this nation to uphold and honor and sustain the Constitution.

God help us, brethren and sisters, to be loyal, to be true, that we may succeed as individuals, as a community, and as a nation, is my prayer, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER RULON S. WELLS

Of the First Council of Seventy

I feel sure that the Latter-day Saints who have assembled here this afternoon have been repaid a hundred fold in hearing the things that have been said. If we will hearken to the counsels that have been given in this conference, I am also sure that it will result in our happiness and exaltation.

A great deal has been said in regard to the testimony that we have of the divinity of this work and the divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ. The Young Men's and Young Women's Mutual Improvement Associations during the present year have had for their slogan, "We stand for an individual testimony of the divinity of Jesus Christ." In this great day and age of the world, when there is so much agnosticism and so much doubt and so much unbelief, it seems to me it is particularly fitting that emphasis shall be laid upon that great and important principle upon which we stand and for which we are laboring, that we may establish it among the children of men.

How are we going to obtain a testimony that Jesus is the Christ?

How may we know and have a testimony of it, that Joseph Smith is a prophet of God? At no time in all the history of the world has the Lord left his children without divine guidance, without some way of communicating to them and letting them know where they stand and what is necessary for them to do in order that they may come to the knowledge of God; because to know him and to know his Son, Jesus Christ, whom he hath sent into the world, is in very deed life eternal. It is highly important, then, that in the community that is enjoying a dispensation of God's providence, a community to whom have been committed the revelations of the Lord, the building up of the Church and kingdom of God here upon the earth, it is very necessary that every man, every woman, and every child shall know that this is the work of God; that Joseph Smith is a prophet whom God has raised up in the day and age in which we live to usher in his glorious dispensation. Do we know it?

A great many people have some very peculiar ideas in regard to the testimony which ought to be in the hearts of every one of them. What is the testimony of Jesus Christ? What is the testimony that Joseph Smith is a true prophet of God? What is the testimony that God lives? What is the testimony that enables us to say that Peter, James, and John were apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ, endowed with power from on high, and that they spake under the inspiration of the Spirit of God? How do we know these things? Let me tell you. There is only one way to know the things of God, and the Lord intends that his people shall receive that knowledge in his appointed way. There is only one way by which we may come to the knowledge of God; only one way in which we may know that Jesus is the Christ; only one way that we may know that Joseph Smith was a prophet sent of God, and it is within the reach of every member of this Church; and it is a shame unto them if they have not received it.

Have we obeyed the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ; have we had faith in him; have we believed in him; and have we been repentant and turned away from our wrongdoing? Have we hearkened to the testimony and advice and counsel of the servants of God? Have we gone into the waters of baptism and received the remission of our sins? Have hands been laid upon us for the reception of the Holy Ghost? If we can answer these questions in the affirmative, every one of us can rise and say, "I know that this is the work of God, because I have received the gift of the Holy Ghost," through which, and through which alone, any man can know of the things of God.

What do you suppose this gift is for? Why do we receive it? O my brethren and sisters, we are living in a world of sin, of darkness, and of error, and the minds of the people are darkened regarding the things of God. Why? Because they have not obtained the gift of the Holy Ghost. That is the condition of the world at large. We have received it. There is nothing in all the world of more practical benefit

to those who enjoy it than the gift of the Holy Ghost. There is nothing more important to us in our lives than to have within us that wonderful gift. Every man that has the gift of the Holy Ghost, every woman, every boy and every girl who has the gift of the Holy Ghost and will keep it, just as sure as they live, they will be exalted in the celestial kingdom of God; and without it, no soul will ever obtain that salvation. And every one that has that gift knows that this is the work of God, for that is what the spirit within us knows. If we have it, then it is ours. Let the spirit speak within you, if you have received this wondrous gift, and I hope that all of you know that this is the work of God, for that is the office of the Spirit of God within you. If you do not, it is because your faith was not sincere, it is because you did not repent of sin and, therefore, you did not receive the remission of your sins, and consequently could not obtain that wonderful gift.

But we possess that spirit in varying degrees. It manifests itself variously among the children of men, brought out by the experiences of our lives and the opportunities that have come to us, wherein the spirit has had opportunity to manifest itself in our lives. Have we given that spirit opportunity? Practical, I say, is this thing, the operations of the Holy Ghost, but some have allowed it to sleep within them; and even in that early day Paul had to write to Timothy, who was really a valiant servant of God, but became, no doubt, a little neglectful. Paul said: "Stir up the gift of God which is within thee, which thou receivedst by the laying on of my hands." That ought to be said to Latter-day Saints, if it is not awake and alive in them, bearing witness to the truth of this work. Then "stir up that gift within you," for you have the right to it.

If you have kept the gift of the Holy Ghost, you have done so by keeping the commandments and keeping yourself sweet and clean and unspotted from the sins of the world. But if you have committed sin and grieved the Spirit of God, it may have departed from you, and that is a terrible condition to be in.

Sometimes I have heard young men who were about to depart into the mission field get up in the congregation in their own ward and say that they did not know that this is the work of God, but they believed it; and they were going out! I dislike to hear a young man say that; I do not like to hear any Latter-day Saint say that. Do not say that. Why? Because you grieve the Spirit of God that is within you. You might as well say, "I haven't received the gift of the Holy Ghost," for that is exactly what it means when you say, "I haven't the testimony of the truth of this work." It is a confession that you haven't the gift of the Holy Ghost. The Spirit of God in you is continually crying out for utterance. Give it the opportunity, and when you do, you will find there will be a burning in your heart that will convince you that you speak the words of truth. You may not know

when you rise on your feet exactly what you are going to say, but give the Spirit a chance, it will declare the truth that this is the work of God, that God lives, that Jesus is the Christ and Joseph Smith is a prophet of God. That is what the Spirit wants to say to every child of God upon the face of the earth, because God knows that they need it.

What is the purpose of our receiving that wonderful gift, the gift of the Holy Ghost? As I stated before, we are living in a world of sin; we have a battle to fight against the powers of evil; we have the knowledge of good and evil, and God is continually striving with us by the power of his Holy Spirit. But while he is doing that, there are other powers in the world, endeavoring to destroy the souls of the children of men. That conflict did not begin here upon this earth. It began in heaven, before the foundations of this earth were laid, even in that primeval day that we sometimes read about, when "the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." Why did they shout for joy? Because the proclamation was made that these, the children of God—you and I and all the inhabitants of the earth—standing in the presence of our Maker, should receive this earth-life experience, and thereby, with a knowledge of good and evil, work out our salvation with fear and trembling before the Lord and be brought back into his presence and exalted, clothed upon with immortality and eternal life. That was the program, and we shouted for joy, you and I and all the sons of God, as we were assembled upon that great occasion. It was necessary that the fall should take place; that Adam should introduce the race of mankind upon the earth; that the law should be broken and the penalty brought into the world, the penalty of death, that came into the world as a consequence of original sin.

But it meant an opportunity of development, of education, of growth of those qualities that are divine, to make us like our Maker, that we might become like him in very deed; for as we were told, our eyes were opened to the knowledge of good and evil. And Jesus was chosen. "Here am I," said he. And his offer was accepted. It was the offer of doing the work that the Father would have done, carrying out the divine will. It was a law that gave to all mankind their individual liberty, free agency, with the knowledge of good and evil, to choose between the two. That is what we obtained through the fall of Adam—the privilege of living here upon this earth, with this knowledge that we have, and with free agency, the right to exercise it; but with admonition to reject the evil and do the good, that we might inherit eternal life in the presence of God. That is what we are here for, and the conflict is still on. There was another one in that council that rebelled against God. He said, "O send me, here am I, too many will be lost in that plan of yours; too many will go astray; too many will be lost, for in the free exercise of their agency they will not do the right thing, many of them, and they will be lost. So

here am I, send me, and I will see to it that not one soul shall be lost. I will compel. This free agency will not do." Freedom was a law of heaven, but slavery and servitude was the plan of this son of the morning, Lucifer, for he it was who made that proposition. And he was rejected and cast down because of his rebellion against God and the plan of life and salvation, and with him fell one-third of the hosts of heaven. Fell where? Right down here upon this earth, where you and I are living. And we meet them every day. You meet them and so do I—Lucifer and his hordes, these that are endeavoring to lead mankind astray, away from the path of right, into that servitude where he will compel and dominate. That is the struggle that is on, and it is in everything that we do, because there is a right way and a wrong way to do everything, and when we elect to do it the right way, we are serving God and keeping his commandments; but when we do it the wrong way, we are yielding to the adversary. The great principle of refraining from sin is enjoined upon humanity, and we have daily need to practice that saving principle; but we are in conflict with a very formidable foe and their name is legion, Satan and all his hosts, endeavoring to gain the victory over us.

Now then, wherein comes the benefit of the gift of the Holy Ghost? Have you thought, or do you think that you can gain the victory over so formidable a foe without the help of God? I do not think so, not one of us. And the Lord does not think so, and he desires that you shall be properly upheld and supported in your endeavor to gain this victory, and he proposes to help you. How? By giving you the gift of the Holy Ghost, without which no man can gain the victory over evil. Have you engaged in that conflict? Hasn't the Lord come to your help? Has he not rescued you from the power of the adversary? If he has, it is because the Holy Spirit has been with you. Don't you know it? Isn't that the testimony of God's power to you?

How did you get the gift of the Holy Ghost? If you have it at all, you have received it because Peter, James, and John came and visited the Prophet Joseph Smith and laid their hands upon his head and ordained him to the Holy Melchizedek Priesthood. That is why you have it. There were some who had received the word of the Lord down in Samaria, but they had not received the gift of the Holy Ghost. They had been baptized with water. "Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent unto them Peter and John [those same men who came to Joseph] who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the Holy Ghost: (for as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized [with water.]) Then they laid their hands on them and they received the Holy Ghost." Acts 8. That is what happened. And if you have received that gift of the Holy Ghost, you have received it because those same apostles came to the Prophet Joseph Smith and laid their hands upon his head and conferred that

Holy Priesthood upon him, and gave him the power that on whomsoever he laid his hands he might receive that same gift. That is the way you got it, every one of us, either directly or indirectly, from that one source.

O, some people think they can get it without that. That is what Simon, the sorcerer thought. It was an outward demonstration there. It was even apparent to him, and when he saw that on whomsoever these apostles laid their hands he received the gift of the Holy Ghost, he came and offered them money, so that on whomsoever he might lay his hands, the same might also receive that gift. You remember the words of Peter, "Thy money perish with thee, for thou hast thought to buy the gift of God with money." O no, it cannot be obtained that way! It cannot be obtained except as God gives it to us. Through the restoration of the Priesthood, we have received these wonderful gifts, the gift of the Holy Ghost, practical in all of its phases, practical to all of us.

But it is a terrible thing to get the gift of the Holy Ghost and then lose it. We can only do that through transgression. If we have only kept ourselves clean, we have it still, if hands have been laid upon us in this Church; and we should stir up that gift until it is alive within us. It will manifest itself, if you will become active; if you will take your part; if you lift up your voice and cry repentance and labor for Zion. The Spirit will show itself within you, if you will declare the truths of heaven; you cannot but say that you know, and the Spirit does know it. It is a terrible thing to lose it, and that is what some people have done. I call attention to one historical instance of it. There was David, the shepherd king of Israel, a man after God's own heart. How the Lord loved that man! He was full of faith; said he, "The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." That was the testimony of David. O how full and overflowing was he with that faith and confidence in God, in whom he believed to the bottom of his soul. But David sinned against God, and in the agony of his soul and in his repentant mood, he cried out to the Lord, "Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from thy presence; and take not thy holy Spirit from me." O, Latter-day Saints, it is a terrible thing to have it taken away. David obtained a promise before he died that the Lord would not leave his soul in hell, and I like to think that he will yet receive compensation for all that he has done in upbuilding the faith of mankind in those unstinted words of his wherein he expresses his devotion and faith in God.

It was practical in every way. Paul wrote to the Corinthian Saints—that is to Saints like yourselves, who had faith in God, had repented of their sins, had received the remission of their sins in the waters of

baptism and had received the gift of the Holy Ghost by the laying on of hands—and said unto them, “Know ye not that ye are the temple of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you. If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy, for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are.” So might we say to Latter-day Saints, “Know ye not that ye are the temples of God, and the Spirit of God dwelleth in you?” Are you not conscious of that, Latter-day Saints? We can realize it. Do not defile that temple, for it is holy. Do not transgress the laws of God, and you will keep the gift of the Holy Ghost; and as long as you do, that is the testimony of the truth of this work, and the only way to have a testimony. What we may not know through the gift of the Holy Ghost is hardly worth knowing. “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God hath revealed them unto us by his Spirit; for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. For what man knoweth the things of a man, save the spirit of a man which is in him? Even so the things of God knoweth no man but the Spirit of God.”

If we have the Spirit of God, then, and then only, can we know the things of God. So let us cultivate the gift of the Holy Ghost that we received by the laying on of hands, for he will lead us back into the presence of God. He is the Comforter, the teacher, the educator, our tutor, our monitor, our daily companion. If we will only so live that we may enjoy his sweet presence, it will enlighten our minds, enlarge our understanding, fill us with wisdom and knowledge and understanding, that we may know the things of God by his holy Spirit, and without it we cannot come to that knowledge.

I rejoice this afternoon in the testimony that I have that this is true, that it is a reality, it is God's way of helping his children to gain victory over evil. The difference between us and the world at large consists, then, primarily in this thing. There are many good people in the world, just as good perhaps as we are. We are sending our missionaries out to them. Why? That they may take unto the inhabitants of the earth, our brothers and sisters who know not the truth, the glad tidings that they, too, may receive the same joys that we have, that they may receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. That is the difference between the world and us. If they can only secure the gift of the Holy Ghost, it will enable them to work out their salvation and bring them back into the presence of God. But there is only one way to get it, and Latter-day Saints know what that way is. And so we send our missionaries out with that message to tell unto the inhabitants of the earth, that they, too, may receive that priceless gift, and be enabled to overcome this world of sin, and eventually be saved and exalted in the celestial kingdom of God.

May the Lord help us to appreciate, then, what it means to have the gift of the Holy Ghost, and let us not say, as long as we have

this gift, that we do not know that this is the work of God. I have heard it sometimes said, "Oh, you want to be very careful about saying what you know." Very true, that may be so; but let me tell you, it is sometimes more dangerous in telling them that you do not know; for then you give the adversary a hold upon you. Do not fall into that danger, because when you say that, you merely indicate that you are not in possession of the gift of the Holy Ghost. Develop it then within you, and as you labor in the ministry, as you labor in advocating the truth, as you labor in bringing men and women to a knowledge of it, and in perfecting your own lives and overcoming your own weaknesses, by the power and influence of that Holy Spirit, you will grow in the knowledge of God, and your testimony will grow day by day; it will burn in your hearts and you will know it beyond all shadow of doubt. That is the office of the Spirit of God, the gift of the Holy Ghost. May we then prize it above all things, and so live that we may always enjoy his sweet companionship, I humbly pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

An anthem was sung by the choir, "God is our refuge and strength."

The benediction was pronounced by Elder David R. Lyon of the Ensign stake. The meeting adjourned.