

ELDER REY L. PRATT

Of the First Council of Seventy and President of the Mexican Mission

I sincerely trust, my brethren and sisters, that I may be inspired by the Lord, and to that end I ask for an interest in your faith and prayers.

In the missionary work in which I am engaged it is always refreshing and is a very great inspiration to us to come to conference and to get into contact with the body of the Church and its leaders. You realize, my brethren and sisters, that frequently for six months at a time we are on the firing line. We are away from the wards and the stakes with their activities, and out of contact, except of course by correspondence, with the auxiliary organizations of the Church and that which is going on at home. Therefore, I say again it is refreshing and inspirational, and I think is of great benefit to the work that we are endeavoring to carry forward, that we should assemble with you in conference. I thank the Lord for this privilege.

I feel especially thankful to the Lord today for my membership in this Church. I feel especially thankful to him for the assurance that I have in my heart that the gospel is true. I thank the Lord that I am not in doubt, for I find a great many people in the world in doubt concerning the means and the way of salvation. I wish to bear you my testimony that I do know that the gospel of Jesus Christ, which is the power of God unto salvation, is restored to the earth in this day and age. I do know that the Lord spoke to Joseph Smith and that he raised him up and made of him a prophet through whom he effected this great restoration.

I sense the responsibility of preaching the gospel of salvation unto the children of men, for as I peruse the scripture I find that it is the intention of the Lord that the gospel shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations, and he has decreed that it should be before he should come again to earth. That responsibility rests upon us as a Church. Those who hold the priesthood hold it for the purpose of administering in the things that pertain to the salvation of the children of men, as well as themselves.

I rejoice in the faithful labors of the missionaries who are sent into the field. It is marvelous to me as I contemplate that year after year we keep up the great force that we have out there; that the brethren at home are able to find the young men to fill the vacancies caused by the release of those who are in the field. When I contemplate the conditions of the world today and the environments that encroach upon us as a Church, the evil if you please (not all that is in the world is good—and there are many temptations that our young folks are beset with in their working hours and in their school life and everywhere that they mingle), I marvel that out of this comparatively small body of people, when you come to compare it with the world at large, the Lord is able to select and send out that great number of young men and young women who are worthy to bear his name and to preach the

principles of the everlasting gospel to the people of the world. They do not all come prepared, my brethren and sisters. They are not all versed in the scriptures. A great deal of the teaching they have received at home has been along lines that do not particularly qualify them for preaching the gospel. But they come with faith in their hearts, they come with a desire to serve, and the vast majority of them come with a strong testimony that the gospel is true; and they teach it from that standpoint. They teach it as though they know whereof they speak. They have faith that the principles of the gospel that they are sent to teach are indeed true and a means of salvation unto our Father's children.

We have, my brethren and sisters, a message of repentance to declare to the world today. I rejoice in the teachings of this conference so far, and in the not uncertain terms in which we as a people have been made to know the dangers that beset our paths, and the certain call of repentance that has come to us. I feel that we should look things squarely in the face as they exist in the world today and not let ourselves sleep in the idea and the thought that because we are members of the Church we are safe, or that because we are prosperous all is well.

I have rejoiced in the report of the President of the Church today regarding the great prosperity that is attending the Church, making possible the great building campaign that is being carried on. But there are other things in the Church, my brethren and sisters, that touch our lives and we should look to them as well, for the Savior said:

"For what is a man profited if he shall gain the whole world and lose his own soul?"

And again when the disciples asked him which was the greatest in the kingdom of heaven, he placed a little child in their midst and said unto them:

"Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven."

Become converted to what? Speaking in a large sense, converted to the fact that God is, that Jesus is the Christ, the Redeemer of the world; converted to that extent that we can exercise an implicit faith in God and in the saving principles of his gospel that he has restored to the earth for our benefit and for our good and for our salvation. Specifically it means, being converted to the gospel. Are we as a people converted to the necessity of living the Word of Wisdom? Except we become converted sincerely and in the same spirit that a little child is converted and is humble and receives without qualification the teachings of his father—unless we become so converted to the Word of Wisdom and the principles of honesty, of justice, of brotherly kindness, of love and of tolerance towards all men—I fear we are still barring ourselves from participation in an ultimate exaltation in the kingdom of our Father in heaven.

I deplore the fact that there is evil existing, but I cannot ignore it,

my brethren and sisters. This evil, thank the Lord, does not exist to the same extent among those who are members of the Church of Jesus Christ as it exists in the world. We find unchastity, immorality, lack of temperance, lack of reverence for God, or for man, or for law. We find men imbued with the idea that all is right if they can get by with it. But it is not, my brethren and sisters. The Lord will not be mocked, and he has given us a plan which he expects us to live up to. I pray to him that I may be sincere all the days of my life. The greatest anxiety is that I may not falter by the wayside, that my faith may remain firm and that my testimony may grow and be strong; and after that I pray for my loved ones. I have passed through peculiar experiences in my life and have met sorrow by reason of having to lay away my loved ones. But as I contemplate those who have gone to the great beyond in their innocence I would ten thousand times rather that they should all go than that they should make shipwreck of their faith. What would it profit me if they were to gain all the wealth of the world or all the education in the world or all the honors of the world, and lose their salvation in the kingdom of our Father in heaven? It would bring to me only sorrow.

I rejoice in the testimony that I have of the gospel and the opportunity that has come to me to labor in the ministry for those who are in darkness. My heart goes out to our Father's children who are in the world. I do not censure them because of the conditions which I have explained; I only feel sorry for them and have an overwhelming desire to carry to them the uplifting principles of this great gospel, and to carry them in such a way that my testimony might carry conviction to their hearts that they are true. That is the greatest desire that I have in the world.

In my ministry I have tried to imbue the young missionaries who are laboring with me and who have labored with me in the past, with this thought, that if they will take care of the work in the field and labor for the uplift of our Father's children they need not put in any time worrying about what kind of an impression they will make when they come home. Something has been said here today concerning the danger that besets the missionaries upon their return home, and the thought has been voiced that some provision should be made to give them something to do in the Church. I have tried to impress them with the idea that the Church is very well officered and very well manned, and perhaps there may be no available place for them even as officers in an auxiliary organization when they get home. I try to impress upon them the idea that the Church is very much in need of honest good members. No one can deprive them of being that no matter how little they might be called upon to do. They can labor zealously in keeping the commandments of the Lord. They can set examples worthy of imitation. They can bear their testimony to their fellow men. They can put themselves in a position to be useful. And even in the auxiliary organizations, as I have observed them in the little contact I have had with them, one of the crying needs is for good

membership. We are pretty well officered, but we need one hundred per cent good membership in all of these auxiliary organizations of the Church, and each missionary who goes home is qualified, if he will but continue in the spirit with which he has labored out there, to be a splendid member in any organization in the Church or in any society that is uplifting in the world.

May the Lord bless us and help us to understand our duties in the Church and help us to perform them faithfully, is my prayer in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.

ELDER JOHN WELLS

Of the Presiding Bishopric

There comes to my mind a little couplet that I learned as a child:

"Lord, how delightful 'tis to see,
An whole assembly worship thee."

We who are here this afternoon have come, I believe, with the desire and purpose to worship our Father in humility. No one could be in a meeting of this kind without being deeply impressed with the spirit and power that is here; without being impressed with the counsel, advice, and testimony that have been given regarding the progress of this great Church of ours.

I want to add a little to what my brother has said concerning those missionaries who return home. I called attention to this matter at one time when I was attending conference in a little town in Southern Utah, because I knew of two cases that had happened there, those of a young man and a girl who had returned home. They had been busy, active, laboring vigorously, doing their best work at the end of their missions, and then came home and almost dropped out of sight. A bishop came to me at the close of the meeting and said: "It has never happened in my ward. I have been a bishop for fifteen years. Yes, we have had missionaries out all the time, more than the average share, and we are proud of that too. No boy or girl has had to go out of this ward to find employment, even in spiritual duties." He further said: "When a young man comes home, if I have time, and I find it mostly, I meet him at the station with his parents and get acquainted with him, and I invite him to see me as soon as the greetings of his family are over. I talk to him about his spiritual viewpoint, and his testimony. I inquire of him what he would like to do in the ward. I try to see that he gets that which he likes to do. I do not give him the chance to take things easy or become lazy in the Church. After that if anything happens that he does not get employment, then we all interest ourselves in him, high councilors and bishopric. We never rest until that young man is employed, for his spiritual growth depends upon his temporal well-being." I was glad to hear this.

Yes, we are here today to be taught, to be reminded, to be encouraged. I have a few thoughts concerning a somewhat old subject.