

ELDER RULON S. WELLS

Of the First Council of Seventy

Elder McKay referred to an admonition given by the Apostle Paul to his son, in the faith, Timothy. That message was to hold the faith. While he was giving expression and explanation of that glorious message, I thought of another message which the same apostle sent to that same valiant servant of the Lord, Timothy. I presume that he felt a fatherly interest in Timothy and probably noted that even that valiant servant of God had become somewhat derelict in the observance of his duty; and so he admonished him to "stir up the gift of God, which is in thee by the putting on of my hands." And I thought that if we or any of us are to hold and keep the faith the means by which it can be done is to stir up within us that glorious gift which we have received by the laying on of hands of the elders of this Church. I refer to that priceless gift, the gift of the Holy Ghost.

There is an absolute necessity on the part of Latter-day Saints, if they are to grow in a knowledge of God and in good works, day by day, that they have the help of their Heavenly Father, which he is more than willing to bestow upon them by transmitting or giving to them this wonderful and priceless gift, the Holy Ghost. It is a privilege that we have, a promise that has been made unto all of our Father's children who will comply with the necessary conditions, that they may have the benefit of that great and wonderful gift. Those conditions are in the first place: Faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. He is the one who was chosen of God to be the Savior of the world, and "God so loved the world that he gave his Only Begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life." Therefore, my brethren and sisters, in the exercise of this faith we must turn to God.

How are we to maintain and to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost? That was very clearly pointed out by the great apostle, Peter, in his sermon on the day of Pentecost:

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ, for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.

"For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, even as many as the Lord our God shall call."

So this gift, wonderful and precious though it is, may be realized and enjoyed by all the children of God to whom this call may come. Missionaries are sent out all over the world to make the call unto the inhabitants of the earth to comply with those conditions that will enable them to receive the wonderful gift by which alone they may know the things of God, that they may grow in the knowledge of him whom to know is life eternal.

President Grant, in his opening address, quoted from the Book of Doctrine and Covenants some very precious words. I am going to repeat two paragraphs from Section 121, which he quoted:

"Let thy bowels also be full of charity towards all men, and to the household of faith, and let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly; then shall thy confidence wax strong in the presence of God; and the doctrine of the priesthood shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven.

"The Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion, and thy scepter an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth; and thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, and without compulsory means it shall flow unto thee forever and ever."

We have no doubt read those wonderful paragraphs time and time again, and sometimes we are disposed to say that they are very beautiful words. That is a literary gem, although it may not in all particulars comply with all the rules of rhetoric; yet to me it is one of the great literary gems. Nothing more beautiful can be found in holy writ. But it is much more than that—more than a literary gem.

Here we have, it seems to me, a wonderful exposition of how to retain the gift of the Holy Ghost, to have the knowledge of the truth, to keep the faith. There are two things that are stated in those paragraphs which are essential and upon which are predicated the most wonderful blessings that we can possibly conceive of. What are they?

First: "Let thy bowels be full of charity towards all men." Well, that is a great commandment, the one that is like unto the first, which is to "love thy neighbor as thy self." It is to let your hearts go out, and especially to the household of faith, in love, sympathy and charity unfeigned, to all men.

And second: "Let virtue garnish thy thoughts unceasingly." If we would garnish our thoughts with virtue unceasingly there would be no room for sin. We need not concern ourselves so much as to what we may do, every act for which we are responsible is preceded by our thoughts, and if those thoughts are pure and holy, if they be garnished with virtue, the act will correspond, and we will not wander into bygone forbidden paths. We will not go to the right nor to the left; we will not fall into sin and iniquity, but we will walk in the straight and narrow path that leadeth unto life eternal. These two things will bring salvation to our souls; for we read that if we do them: "Then shall our confidence wax strong in the presence of God." That means faith; that means that we will hold the faith and it will grow strong. We shall ask and receive, we shall seek and find, we shall knock and the door will be opened unto us. What a wonderful faith we may have if we will comply with those two conditions.

And then we read further: "And the doctrine of the priesthood,"—and that is the power of God—"shall distil upon thy soul as the dews from heaven." Not with any great bombasting, not with any great manifestation, but just quietly and without any assuming, as the dews fall from heaven. What a glorious promise that is, to be able to exercise the powers of the priesthood to which that same section refers so very greatly, and to exercise them in love unfeigned and in long-suffering and in patience. What a glorious thing it is if we can exercise those powers of the priesthood. Yet if we will do these two things;

this doctrine shall distil upon our souls and shall fill our whole being from the crowns of our heads to the soles of our feet.

And then we read on further: "And the Holy Ghost shall be thy constant companion." Latter-day Saints, we know how we received that wonderful gift. It is essential for all mankind to receive it, and the promise has been given to them all if they will comply with the conditions. Now the important thing is to retain it. Do those two things. That means to practice faith in God and repentance from sin, garnish thy thoughts with virtue. That is the great gospel of repentance. Let your faith and your confidence "wax strong in the presence of God," receive these glorious blessings, let your heart go out in love and sympathy for your fellow men; and these blessings and these powers shall be yours and will lead you eventually, just as true as we live, into the presence of God to receive the reward of the righteous. For we read on still further that if we do these things our "scepter"—that is the weapon that we may use to combat the powers of evil—"shall be an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth." That is the sword of truth, a two-edged sword. Learn how to wield it, young men who are going out into the mission field. It is the weapon whereby you may combat the powers of evil and bring converts to the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ—"an unchanging scepter of righteousness and truth." If you will only do these two things, that will be the weapon that you can use effectively in the saving of human souls.

And then comes the climax of all blessings that will accrue to those who will comply with those conditions. It reads like this: "And thy dominion shall be an everlasting dominion." That is our salvation, that is our exaltation, that is wherein we become like unto our Father in heaven, exercising divine power in having bestowed upon us a dominion; and it shall increase. This dominion shall be an everlasting dominion, "and without compulsory means it shall flow unto us forever and ever." That is the gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ.

We read these two paragraphs and do not realize how much we could find within them. The President admonished us to study the book of Doctrine and Covenants. Last year we had for our slogan—the young people of this Church: "We stand for a fuller knowledge of the Book of Mormon and a testimony of its divine origin." I feel like proposing as a slogan for some future consideration: We stand for the Book of Doctrine and Covenants and for a testimony of its divine origin. The books are full of just such passages as these I have quoted, and they have upon them the impress of divinity.

Let us study the word of God, his revelations; for his Church has been built upon that solid foundation which brings us into communion with our Heavenly Father. May we grow in the knowledge of the truth and in good works day by day, and realize the glorious promises that have been made to us, conditioned upon our compliance with the laws upon which they are predicated, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen.