

ELDER DAVID O. McKAY

"It is expedient that the Church meet together often to partake of bread and wine in remembrance of the Lord Jesus."

THE JOY OF FRIENDSHIP

I came to this conference at about ten minutes to the opening hour, and had the privilege of greeting many friends, among whom were at least a half dozen of life-long standing, and others whom I have met in the mission field. My soul was made happy as I shook hands with these dear friends. I esteem it a great privilege to renew the warmth of that friendship. Among these missionary friends is one who, in one sentence, seemed to link this opening session of conference with those held in pioneer days. Commenting on the fact that he left his home in Cache valley only two hours before he was sitting in this tabernacle, he said, "I have taken four days to travel that distance to come to conference with an ox team." Just that remark awakened renewed appreciation in my heart for the work of our pioneers; and it made me appreciate, too, the privilege of living in this most wonderful time in the world's history when we have the enjoyment and blessing of so many marvelous inventions and discoveries, particularly the radio by means of which the British Premier this morning greeted the people of the United States, and everybody who tuned in heard his voice instantly. How easily the gospel may yet be preached to every people!

Well, it is good to meet friends. This conference affords us an opportunity to do so; and our souls are made happy as we shake each other's hands in confidence and brotherhood. In contrast, my soul is chilled and my faculties inhibited if I meet one who I think is magnifying my weaknesses and who seems almost to rejoice in them—who turns his head rather than to shake hands. Such a man makes life chilly.

MEETING GOD

In the house of God, however, we have the opportunity not only of meeting friends and of rejoicing in the strength and encouragement that comes from that meeting, but also of meeting God our Father through his Holy Spirit. We rejoice in his presence. He is here today, and he has inspired President Grant. You felt President Grant's spirit in his opening remarks, you felt his faith, his confidence in his brethren and in this work of God; and if we had nothing else but these blessings to which I have referred we could go away with our souls well fed.

IN THE BROTHERHOOD OF CHRIST

I wonder if the Lord did not have some such thought as this in mind when he said, "It is expedient that the Church meet together

often." We meet in the house of God not as mere acquaintances suspicious of one another, but as brethren in the brotherhood of Christ. We meet in the presence of him who has said, "Love one another." I look forward to the time when the membership of our quorums will approach their quorum meetings in anticipation of that brotherhood and experience that fraternal feeling which strengthens the soul and which inspires all to render greater service to their fellowmen.

SACRAMENT MEETINGS

I believe in meetings. I desire to say this morning that I feel impressed to emphasize what the Lord has designated as the most important meeting in the Church, and that is the sacrament meeting. In this very text which I have read, given to Joseph Smith by revelation, the Lord refers to that special meeting. "It is expedient that the church meet together often." Not for these general purposes to which I have made brief reference, but for the specific purpose of partaking of the sacrament. He has designated a particular prayer to be offered on that occasion. He has prescribed for us only a few set prayers, one of which is the blessing on the bread and water.

THE LORD'S SUPPER

Let us first consider the importance of this sacrament. It is not the only sacrament in the Church. It is particularly designated "The Lord's Supper." But if you will recall the occasion on which that was given or instituted you will agree with me that the Lord himself, the Savior, attached great importance to it. He had met with his twelve disciples in the upper room in Jerusalem on that memorable night of the betrayal. He had pointed out the traitor. He had partaken of the passover with them in accordance with the Jewish practice, and then he took bread and brake it and said, "Take, eat; this is my body, which is broken for you." He took the cup and blessed it, and said, "Drink ye all of it in remembrance of the blood which is shed for you, and this do in remembrance of me till I come; till we eat and drink in the kingdom of the Father." That was given just a few hours before his crucifixion. That alone establishes its importance, but if we put the proper interpretation upon the phrase in Corinthians, 11th chapter, which Paul used when he was teaching this principle to the Corinthians, we learn further that the Lord himself revealed the significance of the sacrament to Paul, and Paul gave specific instructions to the Church at Corinth, in regard to the partaking of these important and sacred emblems. Again in this dispensation the Lord revealed specifically how this part of the worship should be conducted. All God's ordinances and ceremonies are sacred but it seems to me that there is more importance attached to this than perhaps to any other sacrament or ceremony in the Church of Christ. So much for its importance.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF THE SACRAMENT

Now, what does it signify? You will find first that the sacrament

is a memorial of Christ's life and death. When we think of his life we think of sacrifice. Not a moment of his existence on earth did Christ think more of himself than he did of his brethren and the people whom he came to save, always losing himself for the good of others, and finally giving his life for the redemption of mankind. When we partake of the sacrament in his presence we remember him, his life of sacrifice, and service; and we are inspired by that thought and memory. There is nothing won in this life without sacrifice. I am thrilled when I study carefully any principle of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and find that it is part of the whole, or rather that it comprehends the whole. Truly, truth is the sum of existence. So we can associate this sacrament, with all truth, all life. It is all-comprehensive. No thing worth while is obtained in this life without sacrificing, without putting forth effort. The evil one thrusts things upon us but God asks us to reach out and get that which he offers. "Teach self-denial," says Walter Scott, "and make it pleasurable, and you create for the world a destiny more sublime than ever issued from the brain of the wildest dreamer."

THE BOND OF BROTHERHOOD

A second significance or a second principle associated with the administering of the sacrament is the bond of brotherhood to which I have made mention. In the early establishment of the Church of Christ the brethren met, we are told, often at day-break, to partake of this sacrament as in the bond of brotherhood, of oneness. They met, as it were, under oath, comparatively as the Roman soldiers were bound in unit. In the Church at Corinth, when Paul wrote to them regarding their abuse of this holy sacrament, they held, previous to the administering of the sacrament, a love feast in which the rich and the poor met. They brought their food with them,—the rich plenty, of which the poor partook. That was at the beginning, carrying out the passover and the sacrament which followed. But when Paul wrote to them he found that those who had plenty were eating by themselves and those who were poor had nothing. This practice he condemned, saying that it was not part of the sacrament. He told them to satisfy their appetites and partake of the sacrament in remembrance of the body and blood of the Christ.

However, the element of brotherhood has been associated with it always. I remember when I was a boy that there was emphasized even more than we hear emphasized now the necessity of no one's partaking of the sacrament who had ill feelings toward another, and I have heard more than one man say: "I am sorry that I hurt brother so-and-so's feelings, and I ask his forgiveness." He felt it necessary to do that before he was worthy to partake of the sacrament of the Lord's Supper.

We meet in the brotherhood of Christ, all on the same level, each expressing confidence in the other and all in one another. Oh, the strength of brotherhood! Sin divides us. Righteousness unites.

COMMUNION WITH CHRIST

The partaking of the sacrament indicates also how communion with Christ may be secured. It cannot be obtained by Sunday righteousness and week-day indulgence. It implies that we will remember Christ always. "If we show the Lord's death at communion we must show the Lord's life in the world."

DIVINE GUIDANCE

And the fourth great significance is the promise that it is a means of receiving divine guidance. "If a friend is one who summons us to our best, then is not Jesus Christ our best friend? and should we not think of the communion as one of the chief appeals to us to be our best? The Lord's Supper looks not back to our past with a critical eye, but to our future with a helpful one."

THE SACRAMENT PRAYER

May I call attention to the great obligation which every member of the Church assumes when he first partakes of the sacrament on the Lord's day. Think of the prayer revealed in this dispensation: "Oh, God the Eternal Father." What an invocation! An acknowledgment of God as our Creator; the giver of all good; the bestower of all blessings; in whom is all power and all glory; and yet, our *Father*, and we his children. The Fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man! "We ask thee in the name of thy beloved son Jesus Christ," who is interceding for us, through whom all blessings are obtained,— "to bless and sanctify this bread to the souls of all those who partake of it."

Bless the bread! It is only bread. There may be a mystery about the sacrament, but that mystery does not consist in the changing of that bread to the actual body of the Christ. As President Brigham Young has said, the thought is a repulsive one. But it is a symbol, and we ask God to bless it to the souls of all those who partake of it, who *witness* — oh, there is the point. Recall in this regard President Grant's appeal this morning to be honest with the Lord in all your dealings. What a fundamental virtue is honesty! the roundation of all character. It is said to be the mother of a whole family of true virtues. Well, that principle is associated with this great sacrament. We witness, that is, solemnly covenant in the presence of one another, in that great assembly, and "unto thee, O God the Eternal Father"—What?

A GENTLEMAN'S WORD OF HONOR

Before we specify, think of what it means to make a promise. Your word is more sacred than your bond. I like to think of that English gentleman who, finding himself distressed financially, borrowed from a friend, to whom he gave his written note; but before the gentleman received his competence, he was again in financial distress and

borrowed from another friend, to whom he gave only his promise. Both these lenders knew when the gentleman received his money and both called for the return of their money. The first, who held the gentleman's note, was surprised to hear the gentleman say, "I will pay the second first." The first one protested saying, "I loaned you that money first, your lordship."

"Yes, that is true, replied the English gentleman, but you hold my note. This friend has only my word of honor. I will redeem my promise first."

The first gentleman taking the note from his pocket, tore it into pieces, threw it into the waste-basket, and said, "There, your lordship, I have only your promise."

"Since you place it upon that basis you shall have your money first."

A mere incident emphasizing the importance that a gentleman places upon his word of honor.

OUR OBLIGATION

My brethren and sisters, do we always stop to think, on that sacred Sabbath day when we meet together to partake of the sacrament, that we witness, promise, obligate ourselves, in the presence of one another, and in the presence of God, that we will do certain things? Note them. I have time merely to mention them.

The first: That we are willing to take upon ourselves the name of the Son. In so doing we choose him as our leader and our ideal; and he is the one perfect character in all the world. It is a glorious thing to be a member of the Church of Christ and to be called a Christian in the true sense of the term; and we promise that we should like to be that, that we are willing to do it.

Secondly, that we will always remember 'him. Not just on Sunday, but on Monday, in our daily acts, in our self-control. When our brother hurts us we are going to try to master our feelings and not retaliate in the same spirit of anger. When a brother treats us with contempt we are going to try to return kindness. That's the spirit of the Christ and that's what we have promised,—that we will do our best to achieve these high standards of Christianity, true Christian principles.

The third: We promise to "keep the commandments which he has given." Tithing, fast offerings, the Word of Wisdom, kindness, forgiveness, love. The obligation of a member of the Church of Christ is great, but it is as glorious as it is great, because obedience to these principles gives life, eternal life. On the other hand, the man who seeks to live by violating the principles is deceived by the adversary and goes the way to death.

ADDING SIN TO SIN

To partake of the sacrament unworthily is to take a step toward

spiritual death. No man can be dishonest within himself without deadening the susceptibility of his spirit. Sin can stun the conscience as a blow on the head can stun the physical senses. He who promises one thing and deliberately fails to keep his word, adds sin to sin. On natural principles such a man "eats and drinks condemnation to his soul."

We die in this world before our hearts stop beating, as we live and partake of eternal life before we pass into the other world; for this is part of life eternal, and true life consists in obedience to the principles of the gospel. We promise every Sabbath day to keep those principles.

THE BLESSING

And what is the blessing? "That they may always have his Spirit to be with them." What a divine guidance! And I testify to you that divine inspiration is a reality. Men and women who obey the principles of life and salvation, sincerely repent of their sins, and as sincerely strive to live in accordance with the principles of the gospel, are guided and inspired by the Holy Ghost, and are shown things to come. I testify that that guidance is with this Church and has been since the Prophet Joseph Smith established it. I bear you witness too, that this Church is the power of God unto salvation, the gospel of Jesus Christ.

SUMMING UP

To sum up then, the operation of the law of cause and effect is as constant in the spiritual realm as it is in the material world. You obey the principle and you receive the blessing, and the keeping of each promise made in relation to the sacrament brings the results and the blessings as sure as the sun brings light. Order, reverence, attention to divine promises,—the promise to enter into the fold of Christ, to cherish virtues mentioned in the gospel of Christ, to keep them ever in mind, to love the Lord whole-heartedly, and to labor, even at the sacrifice of self, for the brotherhood of man—these and all kindred virtues are associated with the partaking of the Lord's supper. It is good to meet together and especially to renew our covenants with God in that holy eucharist. "Help us O, God, to realize the great atoning sacrifice, the gift of thy beloved Son, the Prince of peace, the Holy One."

GRATITUDE FOR MEMBERSHIP IN THE CHURCH

My heart is full of rejoicing this morning for my membership in the Church, for the privilege I have of meeting you my fellow workers in the Church of Christ. I prize the privilege of associating with the First Presidency of this Church and the Twelve Apostles, the First Council of Seventy and the Presiding Bishopric and the Stake Presidencies. Oh, it is a glorious thing to be one in the brotherhood of Christ! God strengthen us that we may go out and make the sacrament each Sunday that we partake of it what God intends it to be,—the means of strengthening the saints, of eradicating ill will, hard

feelings and back-biting, of establishing unity, love and strength, and keeping the commandments of God, I pray, in the name of Jesus Christ, Amen.

ELDER JOSEPH W. McMURRIN

of the First Council of Seventy, and President of the California Mission

I esteem this a very great privilege, my brethren and sisters, and at the same time, at this moment, it is a very great surprise. I am thankful, however, that I feel in my soul that I am in harmony with the counsels that have already been imparted in this conference and that I believe most sincerely in the doctrines that have been presented for our consideration.

I come up, my brethren and sisters, from the mission field in California, where I have had the privilege of laboring for some time in seeking to spread the truth as it has been revealed in the dispensation in which we live. I am happy to be associated with the young men and women who have been assigned to that field of labor. Generally speaking, the missionaries are all young men, or young women. Occasionally, through the system that has been introduced during recent years, a few men of experience and one or two women of experience have come into the California Mission, as short term missionaries. We have rejoiced very greatly in the companionship of these men and women who have had development and experience for a goodly period of time in the work of the Lord.

You have just learned from the remarks made by President Heber J. Grant that California has been blessed with his presence and with his ministry, both in the stakes that have been established in that great state, and in the branches that belong to the California Mission. The people are always glad in their hearts when they have the privilege of meeting with the President of the Church, and of listening to his testimony which has always been so strong and sure that the work which is under his direction as the President of the Church has been revealed and established by the Lord our God.

We have been blessed just recently, for about five months, with the presence of Doctor James E. Talmage, who has been giving some very remarkable and inspiring discourses over the radio in Los Angeles; and many people, we have discovered, who are not of our faith, have been giving attention to those discourses. We have not only rejoiced in his ministry, as he has delivered the word of the Lord and the doctrines of the gospel over the radio, but we have rejoiced also in his companionship in the wards, and in the branches, that he has visited quite thoroughly throughout the state of California. We feel that we have been very greatly blessed by his presence, by his counsel, and by the doctrines that he has presented for the consideration of the people, both members and non-members of the Church.

We have been blessed also with the ministry of Brother George